

# Charles County, Maryland

**Origin:** Charles County was created in 1658 by an Order in Council. It is not to be confused with an earlier Charles County (1650-1653) known as Old Charles County. The County was named for Charles Calvert (1637-1715), 3<sup>rd</sup> Lord Baltimore. Calvert lived in Maryland from 1661 until he returned to England in 1684. He was Proprietor of the Maryland colony from 1675 to 1689, when he lost his right to govern. From 1692 until Calvert's death in 1715, Maryland was governed as a royal colony.



**Form of Government:** The Code Home Rule issue passed during the general election held on November 5, 2002. The County Commissioners began implementing the new form of government in 2003. Code Home Rule is one of two forms of home rule for counties permissible under Maryland law. Charles County presently is not a charter home rule county, maintaining the pure Commissioner form. The County is governed by the Board of County Commissioners of Charles County ("the Board") consisting of five Commissioners who are elected for a four-year term. The President of the County Commissioners, who must declare his or her candidacy at the time of filing, is elected County-wide and may reside anywhere within the County. The four Commissioner members also run County-wide but one must reside within each of four Commissioner Districts. The President serves on a full time basis and the other Commissioners serve in a part-time capacity. The Board meets Tuesdays and Wednesdays at the Charles County Government Building in La Plata.

Other elected officials include Maryland State Senator, Representatives of the Maryland House of Delegates (3), Resident Judges of the Circuit Court (4), Clerk of the Circuit Court, States Attorney, Sheriff, Register of Wills, Judges of the Orphans' Court (3), and members of the County Board of Education (7).

**Location:** Charles County, Maryland, located on the Southern Maryland Peninsula between the Patuxent and the Potomac Rivers, adjoins Prince George's County on the north and west and St. Mary's County on the east. It comprises approximately 500 square miles, of which 460 are land and 40 are water with 305 miles of shoreline. There are three incorporated municipalities in the County, La Plata, Indian Head and Port Tobacco. La Plata, the County seat, is 71 miles from Baltimore and 25 miles from Washington, D.C.

**Population:** (1990 Census): 101,154; (2000 Census): 120,546; (2010 Census): 146,551

**Executive Offices:** The County's executive offices are located in the Government Building located at 200 Baltimore Street in La Plata, Maryland.

Mailing address is: County Commissioners of Charles County  
P.O. Box 2150  
La Plata, MD 20646

Hours of Operation: Monday - Friday 8:00 A.M. - 4:30 P.M.

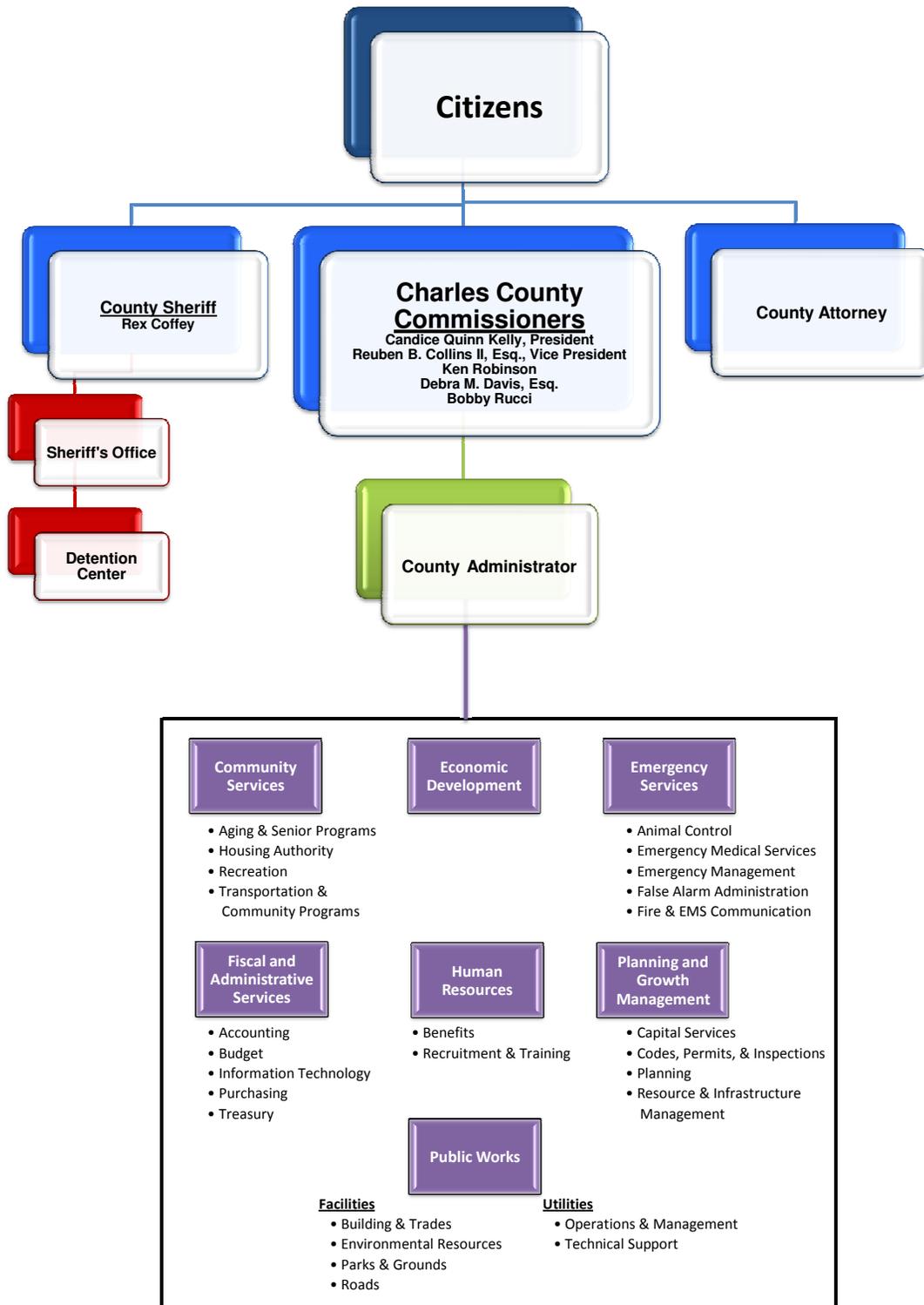
The County's central telephone numbers are:

Local Line	(301) 645-0550	Toll Free	1-877-807-8790
Metropolitan Line	(301) 870-3000	Fax Number	(301) 645-0560
Maryland Relay Service TDD			1-800-735-2258

**Visit the County's web site at:** [www.CharlesCountyMD.gov](http://www.CharlesCountyMD.gov)

**E-Services:** To meet the demands of today's busy schedules, Charles County Government is proud to provide our residents numerous online electronic services. Residents are now able to pay Real Estate Taxes, Red Light Citations, Parking Violations, False Alarm Fees/Fines, and Water & Sewer Bills online. Charles County Government's online e-services also include viewing the status of a permit, making a property tax inquiry, viewing your water & sewer utility billing account information, registering for recreation programs, completing a Public Event Application, and requesting recycling bins.

# Charles County Government Organizational Chart



Other agencies which receive county funding:

- |                   |                            |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| Public Schools    | Board of Fire & Rescue     |
| Community College | University of MD Extension |
| Libraries         | State's Attorney           |
| Health Department | Circuit Court              |
| Social Services   | Orphan's Court             |
| Soil Conservation | Election Board             |

# Charles County, Maryland

Just 15 miles south of the Washington Capital Beltway, Charles County is the gateway to Southern Maryland. It is one of five Maryland counties which are part of the Washington DC-MD-VA-WV metropolitan area. The northern part of the County is the “development district” where commercial, residential and business growth is focused, allowing the remainder of the County to retain its pastoral character. Waldorf, White Plains, and the planned community of St. Charles are located here. Incorporated towns include La Plata, the County seat, and Indian Head, home of the Naval Surface Warfare Center.

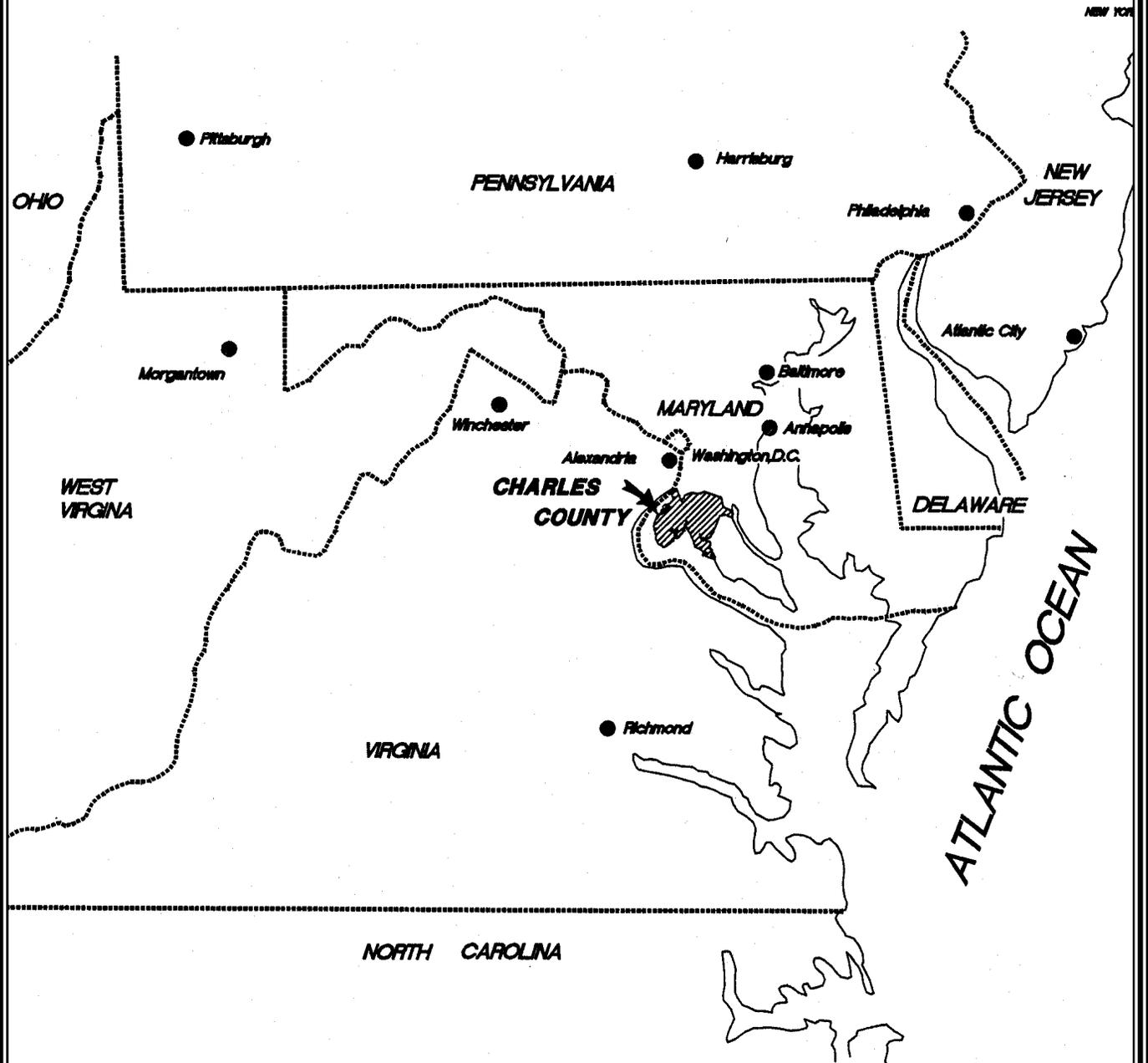


<b>Location</b>	
<u>Driving distance from Waldorf</u> <i>(in miles)</i>	
Atlanta, GA	609
Baltimore, MD	56
Boston, MA	452
Chicago, IL	710
New York, NY	241
Philadelphia, PA	152
Pittsburgh, PA	247
Richmond, VA	91
Washington, DC	25

<b>Climate and Geography</b>	
Yearly Precipitation (inches)	44.0
Yearly Snowfall (inches)	17.2
Summer Temperature (°F)	73.9
Winter Temperature (°F)	37.6
Duration of Freeze-Free Period	187 days
Land Area (square miles)	460
Water Area (square miles)	40
Shoreline (miles)	305
Elevation (feet)	sea level to 235

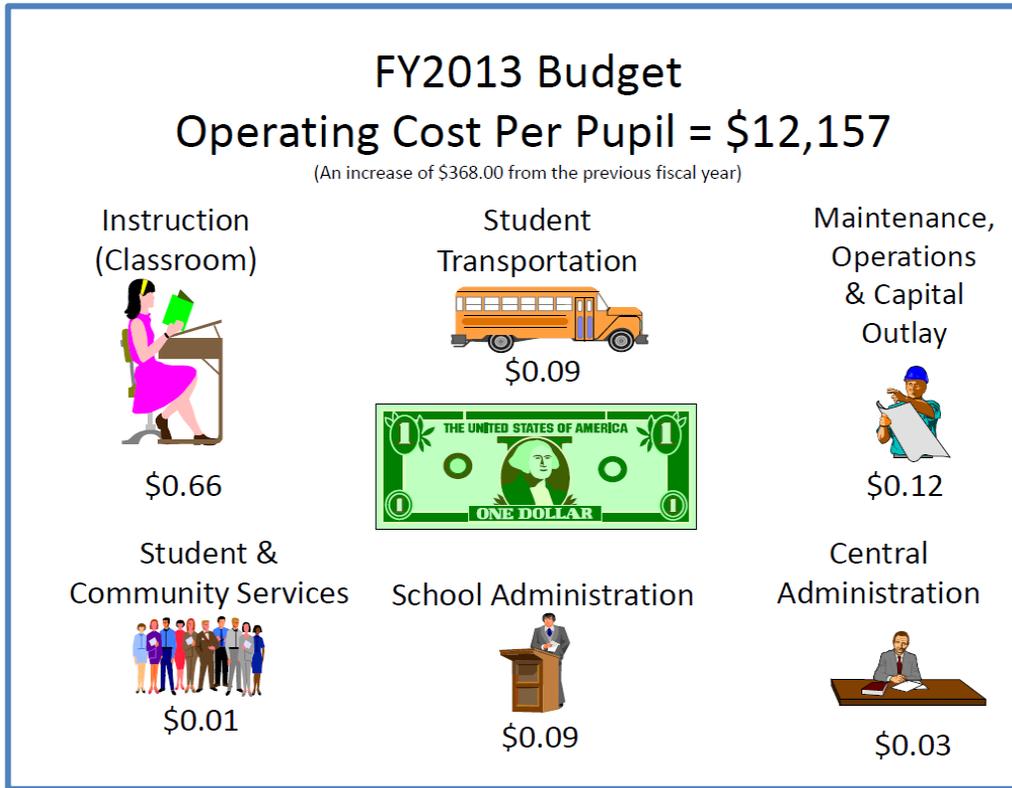
Source: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and MD State Office of Climatology (30-year averages); MD Geological Survey

# CHARLES COUNTY LOCATION MAP



**PREPARED BY THE CHARLES COUNTY DEPARTMENT  
OF PLANNING AND GROWTH MANAGEMENT-MAPPING**

# PUBLIC SCHOOLS



**The Charles County Public School System is composed of 39 schools & centers:**

- 21 Elementary Schools
- 8 Middle Schools
- 6 High Schools
- 4 Centers/Programs

The Charles County Public School System owns more than 3,065,414 square feet of buildings. (This does not include footage for trailers.) The new St. Charles High School will open in August 2014.

## Student Enrollment Full-time Equivalent FY2004 - FY2013

Fiscal Year	FTE	Change	Percent
FY04	24,451	992	4.2%
FY05	25,012	562	2.3%
FY06	25,479	467	1.9%
FY07	25,797	318	1.2%
FY08	25,843	46	0.2%
FY09	25,861	17	0.1%
FY10	25,897	36	0.1%
FY11	25,955	58	0.2%
FY12	25,870	(85)	-0.3%
FY13 Est.	25,962	93	0.4%

# COUNTY & STATE PARKS

## **Bensville Park-** Waldorf

Developed facilities currently include athletic playing fields and a hiking trail. Sports fields include: one regulation-size baseball, three little League baseball, five soccer, and one football field. A separate field has been designated as an area for general community use (all other fields require a permit). Located on Bensville Road (Rt. 229) between Pomfret and Waldorf.

## **Bryantown Soccer Complex-** Bryantown



The complex is comprised of twelve soccer fields. The field sizes accommodate all age divisions and are for official league use-by permit only.

## **Cedarville State Park -** Waldorf

Marked trails for hiking, mountain biking and equestrian rides. Camping, hunting, fishing activities are also available. Picnic areas and shelters are on the premises.

## **Chapel Point State Park -** Port Tobacco

This scenic 600-acre park offers a small sandy launch area for small boats, canoes and kayaks.

## **Chicamuxen Wildlife Management Area -** Indian Head

Ideal for bird watchers and hikers, this protected 381-acre area offers a wide variety of waterfowl species and almost daily sightings of bald eagles.

## **Doncaster Forest -** Doncaster

Perfect for a picnic getaway, this 1,445 acre site is great for hiking or horseback riding.

## **Friendship Farm Park and Trail -** Nanjemoy

This scenic park overlooks the Nanjemoy Creek and offers a variety of recreational activities including fishing, baseball and hiking along three miles of trails. A county-owned boat ramp offers easy access to the Potomac River and is open year round, from dawn to dusk, to the public. Fishing from the pier and shoreline is permitted.

## **Gilbert Run Park -** Dentsville

Within this scenic wooded parkland are hiking and nature trails, picnic areas (grills and tables), picnic pavilions, playground areas, and fishing piers. The main attraction is a 60 acre fresh water lake which affords fishing, pedal boating, row boating, and canoeing. Fishermen are able to catch bass, bluegill, trout and catfish. A boat ramp is also provided for convenience (electric motors only). Park visitors can also enjoy the Nature Center which features a 150 gallon aquarium and a variety of natural specimens. Also available to the public are fishing supplies, and concessions. Gilbert Run Park is opened from March to November with seasonal hours of operation.

## **Indian Head Rail Trail-** Indian Head to White Plains

Thirteen mile hiker/biker trail developed on an abandoned Navy railroad corridor. This exciting new trail connects the Town of Indian Head with the White Plains area of the County. Runners, cyclists and nature enthusiast enjoy the benefits of this significant park facility. The IHRT is not just an amenity for our local residents; it also will be one of the County's most powerful tourism revenue venues.



## **Laurel Springs Regional Park -** La Plata

Laurel Springs Park is located on Radio Station Road in La Plata. This facility offers a multitude of areas for residents to pursue their leisure interest. Developed facilities include an ADA accessible special needs playground (largest in the region), two small picnic pavilions, and several informal areas with picnic tables. Athletic playing areas include: two full size baseball, five softball, three little league, one football and five soccer fields. A number of these fields are lighted for evening play. Athletic fields are available for official league use by permit only. A field is also available for community pick-up play. Fitness enthusiasts will enjoy a 3 mile running/walking trail which loops through the wooded perimeter of the park. (This trail is open year round.)

## **Mallows Bay Park –** Riverside on the Potomac River

Local boaters can enjoy immediate access to this world-class fishery. Includes 50' launch ramp and boarding pier for power boaters, a kayak launch dock, interpretive signs and parking. In addition to shoreline fishing areas, the park offers trails and wildlife viewing opportunities.

# COUNTY & STATE PARKS

## **Marshall Hall Boat Launching Facility**

Located in the northwest section of the County at the end of Route 227, this boat launching facility gives direct access to the Potomac River. Available, free to the public, are two boat ramps, a boarding pier and parking for approximately 25 boat trailers. This is a popular area for shoreline fishing. Marshall Hall Boat Launching Facility is open from dawn to dusk year round.

## **Maxwell Hall Park - Hughesville**

Located in the extreme eastern portion of our county, this 680 acre park currently has over 14 miles of hiking and equestrian trails. Trail users enjoy a mix of wooded and open field experience with occasional scenic views of the Patuxent River. Access to sandy beach is a favorite trail feature. A fully restored 17th century house is located on the property and plans are underway to open the house for public tours. The property's involvement in the War of 1812 will be included in the interpretation.

## **Myrtle Grove Wildlife Management Area - La Plata**

Acres of forests/fields considered a prime location for bird watching & nature photography.

## **Oak Ridge Park - Hughesville**



This eastern area park offers a combination of active and passive recreational activities. Athletic fields for official league use, by permit only, include little league and full size baseball fields, and a football/soccer field. Also a field is available for community pick-up play. A playground & picnic pavilion area is located at this facility. Wooded equestrian trails and two show rings are available on a first come, first served, basis unless there are scheduled events. This facility is available for rent by equestrian organizations and ideal for youth and open events. This area of Oak Ridge Park is open to the public seven (7) days a week from dawn to dusk.

## **Pisgah Park**

This park serves the western portion of Charles County. Sports fields in this 200+ acre park include: two youth baseball, one regulation baseball, four soccer, a softball, and a football field. Seven of these fields will be lighted for evening play. Additional amenities will include a restroom building, playground, and picnic facilities.

## **Purse State Park - Nanjemoy**

A 90-acre reserve with moss-covered rock walls and stunted trees located on Wades Bay off the Potomac River, great for fossil hunters.

## **Robert D. Stethem Memorial Sports Complex- Waldorf**

Comprised of ten little league and big league baseball fields. The field sizes accommodates all ages, from T-ball to adults, for official league play. Fields are available by permit only. The park also includes playground facilities.

## **Ruth B. Swann Memorial Park - Bryans Road**

This western area park borders Pomomkey Creek and the Potomac River. Combinations of both active and passive recreational activities are available from large open areas for soccer and baseball to picnicking and bird watching. Located at this park is a lighted baseball/little league field and football/soccer field that are available to organized leagues during the playing seasons by permit only. Picnic areas and a playground are available on a first come, first served, basis. Hikers can take advantage of the 2.4 mile foot trail which passes through mature woodland on its way to the shoreline of the Potomac River.

## **Smallwood State Park - Marbury**

A 628-acres park offering fishing, camping, kayaking, canoeing, hiking, picnicking and a tour of the restored home of Revolutionary War hero General William Smallwood. This park also houses Sweden Point Marina which offers six boat launching ramps, fifty slips, and boat rentals.

## **Southern Park - Issue**

Offering a wide variety of recreational activities for all ages, this park is located in southern Charles County off of Route 257 in Issue. Visitors can enjoy a scenic view of the Potomac River. A playground, picnic areas, ball fields, tennis courts, and a fishing pier are available. Southern Park is open to the public from dawn to dusk.

# COUNTY & STATE PARKS

## Turkey Hill Park- La Plata

Facilities include: four soccer fields, a football field, two picnic pavilions, one volleyball court, a multi-purpose area for informal recreation activities, and a dog park. This park is situated on property which is leased from the State Highway Administrated.

## White Plains Regional Park

White Plains Park is located at the intersection of DeMarr Road and St. Charles Parkway. Park facilities include lighted tennis courts, tot lot and playground, a dog park, and several small picnic pavilions available on a first come, first served, basis. Athletic fields (for official league use-by permit only) include three soccer fields, one lighted softball field, one lighted baseball field, one lighted Little League field and one lighted football field. Also a field is available for community pick-up play. Open to the public from 8:00 A.M. (9:00 A.M. in winter months) until dusk. During some athletic events, the park remains open later into the evening.



## White Plains Skatepark

A 15,000 square foot concrete-based skate park featuring various sized bowls, transitions, and a challenging street course.



## White Plains & Turkey Hill Dog Parks

Public off-leash areas operated and maintained by the Department of Public Facilities. County dog owners and their pets are invited to enjoy these unique facilities. Our Dog Parks provide safe, legal areas in which dogs can run, play, and socialize.

# GOLF COURSES

## Swan Point Country Club-

Tucked along the banks of the Potomac River, this waterfront club offers an 18-hole championship golf course that has been rated one of the best by Golf Digest.



## White Plains Golf Course-

Regionally acclaimed 18-hole public golf course. Well-groomed undulating greens and Bermuda grass fairways offer a challenging experience for all levels of play. The Golf Course also offers a Driving Range.

# RECREATION

**Capital Clubhouse-** Southern Maryland's ultimate recreational and sports complex, the Capital Clubhouse, is a 90,000 square foot year 'round sports center for all ages. Under one roof you will find: an NHL-size ice rink, two multi-sport courts, a rock climbing wall, four party rooms, state-of-the-art sound and lighting systems, and year 'round FUN!

**Community Centers-** There are **eight school based community centers** located in selected County elementary and middle schools which are available for public enjoyment. These facilities offer a variety of programs, sports, services, activities, summer camps, and recreational opportunities to persons of all ages. Community centers are focal points within their geographic area that generate a sense of community through interaction and programs. Along with traditional recreation activities, community centers provide less structured programs geared toward developing community relations and providing needed supportive services.

In addition to school based community centers, the **Nanjemoy Community Center** operates Monday through Friday, year round and offers a wide range of programs and services including: recreational programs, summer camps, benefit intake, Sheriff's Office Station, and facility rental. The Department of Community Services located in **Port Tobacco** has a full size gymnasium available for basketball, volleyball, and community use.

# RECREATION

**County Recreation Programs-** Countywide recreational and leisure time experiences for the citizens of Charles County, including recreational classes and special events, indoor sports leagues for youth and adult, drop-in programs, special population programs and supports the Special Olympics, summer aquatics and swim lessons, summer sports camps, trips and tours, and amusement park discount ticket sales.

**Elite Gymnastics and Recreation Center-** a state-of-the-art facility administered by the Charles County Department of Community Services and located in Waldorf. This facility provides an unequalled facility for instruction in gymnastics, dance, and recreation. The center is a 29,000 square foot, year-round recreational facility offering day, evening, and weekend programs. Elite is equipped with an AAI Vault Table, AAI Springboard, AAI Elite 884 Bars, AAI Spring Beam, Palmer Spring Floor and various other practice and instructional equipment. The facility also features a toddler gymnastics area, martial arts and dance studios, an observation area, party room, and a pro shop.



**Pools-** The County operates five public swimming pools. Year round aquatics programs are offered at **two indoor pools at Lackey and North Point High Schools**. Seasonal **outdoor facilities are located at La Plata, McDonough, and Thomas Stone High Schools**. Aquatics programs such as water safety, water aerobics, swim lessons, competitive swim leagues and general swim lessons are offered year-round.

**Regency Furniture Stadium-** is home of the Southern Maryland Blue Crabs professional baseball club with over 70 home games. The ballpark offers a full range of family friendly features and attractions, including a large catered picnic area overlooking the field and a fantastic amusement area for kids of all ages. The ballpark serves as a multipurpose facility by accommodating football, soccer, lacrosse and other sporting events, as well as concerts, expos, and other entertainment events. Regency Furniture Stadium features approximately 4,200 reserved seats and lawn seating to watch the action from the grass berms around the outfield. All seats are very close to the action.



**Senior Centers-** The County operates **four senior centers**, which serve as community focal points where older persons come together in an atmosphere of wellness to promote independence and improve their quality of life. Senior centers address the needs of an ever-increasing older population, providing a wide array of services and activities.

# ATTRACTIONS

## *Our Past Preserved....*

**La Plata Train Station-** This historic building recalls the railroad's impact on Charles County during the growth boom of the late 1800's.

**Port Tobacco Courthouse-** Settled in 1634, Port Tobacco was once Maryland's second largest seaport and was listed on early World Maps. This settlement was originally the site of the Indian Village of Potopaco. Port Tobacco was the first county seat, but after the river began silting up and after a shift of occupations from tobacco farming to other trades and industry people moved to the town of La Plata where the new railroad was being built. The county seat was eventually moved to La Plata.



The first Charles County Courthouse was completed in 1729, and a second one in 1819. In 1892, the Courthouse burned. The present building is a reconstruction of the third structure. During tours, costumed docents tell the story of Port Tobacco, from 1620 to present day.

**Port Tobacco One-Room School-** The school is the original structure built in 1876 by the towns people with funds from the county. It was in use as a school until 1953, serving the population of Port Tobacco. The school normally enrolled students from grades one through seven. During the 1990's, the school was restored by the Charles County Retired Teachers= Association, and is furnished with items from the early time period.

**Thomas Stone National Historic Site-** Thomas Stone was a well-respected lawyer and politician throughout Maryland. He was one of four Maryland signers of the Declaration of Independence and contributed in the creation of the United States while serving as both a Continental Congressman and as a framer of the Articles of Confederation.



Stone and his wife, Margaret Brown, were from two of the most influential families in Charles County and in Maryland. They built their country home, Haberdeventure, in the early 1770's. This site reflects a Southern Maryland tobacco plantation with a unique five-part colonial mansion. The site also contains 19<sup>th</sup> Century farm buildings. Haberdeventure was in the Stone family until 1936. After a 1977 fire nearly destroyed the mansion, it became a National Park Service property. Restoration work began in 1992 and was finished in 1997.

**African-American Heritage Society-** The museum contains various artifacts that were used during the time of slavery. It depicts the life and history of African-Americans who lived in Charles County and the contributions of African-American citizens of Southern Maryland from 1658 to present.

**American Indian Cultural Center / Piscataway Indian Museum-** This museum shows the life of the Native American before European contact. Its focus is on Maryland's indigenous people; it also includes information about other areas. There is a full-scale replica of a long house, as well as other items that represent life in the area—tools, weapons, and the arts. The center educates visitors on the art and culture of the Native American Indian and hosts an annual Pow-Wow.

**Dr. Samuel A. Mudd House-** The Dr. Samuel A. Mudd House Museum was the home of Dr. Samuel A. Mudd, the country doctor who set the broken leg of John Wilkes Booth. Booth fractured his leg as he leaped from the presidential box at Ford's Theater after shooting President Lincoln on Good Friday, April 14, 1865. Booth and David Herold arrived at Dr. Mudd's home at 4 a.m. on April 15. Dr. Mudd, not knowing the real identities of his visitors nor that President Lincoln had been assassinated, examined Booth's leg, had a splint made for Booth, and had both him and Herold retire to an upstairs bedroom. Booth and Herold left by 2 p.m. that same afternoon.

Dr. Mudd was tried and convicted by a Military Court for setting Booth's leg and harboring him for a few hours. He was sent to Fort Jefferson Prison, Florida for life. He was pardoned and released by President Andrew Johnson on February 8, 1869 for his service of caring for the sick during an outbreak of yellow fever at the island prison. Dr. Mudd died January 10, 1883, at the age of 49.

Today, the house is open to the public and tours are provided by costumed docents. The house is a two-story, two-part early Victorian frame farmhouse. The central structure was built around 1754. It is furnished with original and family pieces from the time period.

# ATTRACTIONS



**Smallwood Retreat House** -The Smallwood Retreat House was built around 1760 and was the home of General William Smallwood until his death in 1792. The house was reconstructed and opened to the public in 1958, under the direction of the Smallwood Foundation, Inc. General Smallwood was heavily involved in the American Revolution and achieved the highest rank of Major General at the battle of Camden, South Carolina. After the war, he was appointed Governor of Maryland and served three one-year terms in this office.

**Friendship House**- Friendship House is one of Charles County's oldest houses. This building was built around 1680 by Colonel William Dent in a hall and parlor manner, an architectural style that originated in medieval England. It is a typical small tidewater house and has many features of an English yeoman structure with brick nogging interior. This house may have been one of many that Colonel Dent used to supervise his vast holdings.

In 1968, Friendship House almost disappeared. The owner of the house had decided to burn it, but rather than see such a special building be destroyed, the Historical Society of Charles County dismantled it, piece by piece, methodically numbering everything so it could be re-erected later. It was stored for seven years before a proper site was located for reconstruction. Finally in the Spring of 1976, Friendship House was rebuilt on the campus of the Charles County Community College.

## Historic Churches-

### Roman Catholic

Mount Carmel Monastery, (La Plata, 1790)  
St. Ignatius Church (Chapel Point, 1641)  
St. Mary's Church (Newport, 1674)  
St. Peter's Church (Waldorf, 1700)  
St. Joseph's Church (Pomfret, 1763)  
**Baptist**- Nanjemoy Baptist Church (Nanjemoy, 1791)

### Episcopal Churches

Christ Church, Ironsides (Durham Parish, 1692)  
Christ Church, Wayside (William & Mary Parish, 1692)  
Christ Church, La Plata (Port Tobacco Parish, 1692)  
Trinity Church, Newport (Trinity Parish, 1744)  
**Quaker**- Patuxent Friends Cemetery (1871)

*Illustrations by: Joseph Troy*

# CULTURAL ARTS

**Charles County Arts Alliance (CCAA)** - was founded with the goal of stimulating, promoting, encouraging, and providing recognition of the arts and the creative spirit in Charles County, MD. A variety of events, workshops, and services are available to help Charles County artists and arts organizations succeed and thrive. The CCAA maintains two galleries for visual artists in public spaces around Charles County. The Galleries are all located in La Plata at the: Government Building and Civista Hospital. The CCAA also sponsors the annual River Artsfest which is the largest outdoor arts festival in Charles County. River Artsfest celebrates ALL the arts and ALL the talented visual, performing and literary artists in our Southern Maryland region.

**Indian Head Center for the Arts**- The Indian Head Center for the Arts' mission is to provide a broad spectrum of arts services to the community and to act as a community center, encouraging community interaction, economic development and the creation of opportunities for children, youth and residents. The Center is managed by the Chesapeake Bay Floating Theatre, Inc., a registered nonprofit. With its 84 seat intimate setting and 450 square foot stage, the Black Box Theatre provides a professional venue for performance artists of all types.

**College of Southern Maryland, Fine Arts Center**- sponsors various exhibits and performances including, theatre productions, music concerts, dance performances, gallery exhibits, ensemble opportunities for the entire community, and kids' and teen college classes in the arts.

**Mattawoman Creek Art Center**- is a not-for-profit organization seeking to encourage the practice and appreciation of the visual arts in the Southern Maryland community. The Center is located at Smallwood State Park in Marbury, Maryland and holds 8 to 10 Art Exhibits per year, plus special events, workshops, and classes. The gallery is open Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from 11am to 4pm during scheduled exhibitions and shows.

**Port Tobacco Players**- strives to entertain, educate, uplift, challenge, enlighten, and enrich their audiences, volunteers and community by providing consistent quality productions at affordable prices. Six shows per season are performed on the recently renovated main stage in downtown La Plata, Maryland and there are also performs countless road productions with their Encore and Encore Kids touring companies.